



State Journal photo/CAROLYN PFLASTERER

Extreme dry conditions have increased the danger of grass fires in Madison and the area. On Wednesday, a grass fire just north of

Hammersley Road and east of Gammon Road took Madison firefighters about an hour to extinguish. **Details on 1C.**

Burning ban ordered

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State Journal staff
and Associated Press

A strict burning ban, effective Saturday, has been ordered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for designated rural areas of 43 drought-stricken counties due to concern that a killer fire could occur, DNR Secretary C.D. Besadny said Wednesday.

DNR Fire Information Officer Holly A. Kuusinen emphasized that the entire state is critically dry and should be included in the ban. DNR, however, only has jurisdiction over land in 43 of the state's 72 counties.

Besadny said the emergency burning order will prohibit all types of outside fire, including cigarette smoking, on public and private lands in all or part of the 43 counties.

The ban includes camping fires except those in authorized fire rings or grills, Kuusinen said.

The area includes counties in the northern and central parts of the state and along the Wisconsin River, he said, including, immediately north and west of Madison, the northwest section of Dane County and Adams, Juneau, Sauk, Richland, Columbia, Iowa and Crawford counties.

Meanwhile, Gov. Tommy Thompson announced a plan to provide drought-stricken farms extra financial aid.

Thompson said he has asked for authorization of an additional \$5 million in loans to farmers in the state's Credit Relief Outreach Program.

Under the program, eligible farmers can qualify for 90 percent guaranteed loans at reduced interest rates to finance replanting or purchase of animal feed.

The governor said his request, which must be approved by the Legislature's Joint Fi-

nance Committee, was prompted by drought conditions and encouraged by rural legislators.

The burning ban, Besadny said, is "designed to protect the resources, property and human life in roughly 14½ million acres of forest land we control. It won't be lifted until we get sufficient rain."

Besides these counties, he said the DNR urges everyone to be careful with burning materials.

"This is the driest I've seen the state in a long, long time," he said.

DNR officials said 5,130 acres have burned statewide so far this season in 2,110 fires.

■ **Showers fail to loosen grip of Midwest drought/3A**